Everyone's A Winner At Gala Vaught Party

SHINING HOUR — John Vaught, former Ole Miss football coach, and Mrs. Vaught shared a light moment with Mrs. Allen C. Thompson Jr. (right), who entertained with a party for them last night in her home in West Memphis. Miss Rosie Eberle (second from right), representing the Memphis State University Press, had just presented Mr. Vaught with a copy of his book, 'Rebel Coach', bound in a special cover.

—Staff Photo

A REBEL went to Razorback country and conquered last night — not on a football field but at a gala party.

The Rebel was John Vaught, former Ole Miss coach, and the party was at the West Memphis home of Mr. and Mrs. Allen C. Thompson Jr., lifetime Ole Miss buffs.

The occasion was a celebration of the publishing date this weekend of Vaught's book, "Rebel Coach," and East Arkansans and Memphians gathered to meet the former coach and his wife, popular Johnsie, who were the guests of honor.

A CEREMONY was introduced by Robert L. Smith, West Memphis vice mayor, who like all the other guests wore a tiny Rebel flag.

He presented a certificate of honorary citizenship in West Memphis (Arkansas) to Vaught, who immediately declared, "The first person I'm going to tell about this is Frank Broyles!"

THE REAL CEREMONY was the presentation to Vaught of a very special copy of his book. The beautiful book was presented by Miss Rosie Eberle, editorial assistant with Memphis State University Press, on behalf of the book's publishers.

Tall and handsome, and unusually grave for a moment, Vaught studied the book with appreciation. Its special cover, bound in natural Algerian goatskin, opened to reveal end sheets of handmade British paper and gilding of 24 karat gold that glowed in his big hands.

Looking equally pleased on the sidelines was William Sorrels, managing editor of The Commercial Appeal and the book's editor, who ardently believes that Ole Miss football is the house that Vaught built. He was there with his wife, Carolyn, who looked petite and charming in a champagne-beige silk pantsuit.

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JOHNSIE VAUGHT, parted from her husband by the crowd after the little ceremony, looked lovely in a dress of yellow Alaskine beaded at the V-neckline and at the cuffs of the long sleeves.

"People ask me what I've been doing since Johnny had his heart attack in October and retired. Well, he was slowed up for a while but he's been going good — the doctor's pleased with him. He keeps me busy running with him — when he says 'Go,' I go.

"We live on a farm with 150 head of black Angus that he takes care of. He rides, hunts and plays golf. He's played in a tournament in Alabama with Bear Bryant and at Bella Vista, Ark. — with Darrell Royal, I believe. We have visited relatives and lots of our kinfolk have visited us."

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GUESTS MILLED through the home's focal point, a huge hall centered with a spiral staircase of black wrought iron with a fountain at the base.

Bustling about their duties were Mrs. Richard Upton, who was wearing a French maid uniform — complete with organdy cap — that she had as a costume when she was Miss University of Arkansas, and Mrs. Jimmy Spottswood, who was enveloped in a white chef's uniform.

The hostess, who wore a long culotte-dress of blue denim printed all over with rebel flags, explained that her unusual help had been acquired at the West Memphis Charity Ball auction last winter. "We won them — Patti as a maid and June as a cateress — with a bid of $119," she laughed.

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THE BUFFET TABLE was laden with a great eye of round, corn casseroles, vegetable trays, hot and cold dips and sweets.

Among those in line were Mr. and Mrs. Cecil Oliver, Miss Eulalee Dacus, Mrs. Zeb Freeman, Mr. and Mrs. Eugene Barham, Mrs. J. A. Pulliam, Mr. and Mrs. C. B. Nance, Mr. and Mrs. Davis Biggs, Mr. and Mrs. Charles Brown, Dr. and Mrs. Gilbert Jay and Mr. and Mrs. Martin Klindworth.

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An attractive Memphis couple, Mr. and Mrs. Norman Simpson, stood by the two-story-high stained glass window at the hall's rear.

When someone admired her dress of gold silk-ribbon, Mrs. Simpson laughed, "I made this myself, most of it in the car while we were going to football games at Oxford or Jackson."

Before leaving, Coach Vaught — as he'll always be known — visited the home's Ole Miss Room, which is colorful with memorabilia, including an Ole Miss Tiffany lamp and a Rebel flag painted on the wall.

"The first Ole Miss game last week was pretty tough for a while for me," he confessed. "I got by myself in the press box and it was pretty bad when I saw them come on the field with me not down there. But after a while, it was all right.

"I'll be right there in the stands for tomorrow's game." —Alice Fulbright